September 23, 2003

To: NITC Commissioners

From: Anne Byers, Community IT Manager

Subject: Activities Addressing Community and Economic Development

I will not be able to attend the NITC meeting on Sept. 30.   However, I have prepared a number of documents giving an update on Community Council activities which address community and economic development. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please e-mail abyers@notes.state.ne.us.

Community Technology Fund Report. Projects funded through the 2002 Community Technology Fund range from the development of a municipal wireless network used to improve the delivery of local government services to the placement of computers in local learning centers to expand access to educational opportunities in rural areas.   More information on these projects can be found in the meeting materials.

IT Planning and Mini Grant Program.   In the fall of 2002, eight communities and regional groups began conducting technology assessments and developing a technology plan using the *IT Planning and Assessment Workbook*. Each participating community received a $2,500 mini grant to support their IT planning efforts.   As of Sept. 22, 2003, six of the eight communities and regional groups have completed technology plans. Alliance, Custer County, Edgar, Keya Paha/Brown/Rock Counties, West Point and York have prepared technology plans and are moving into the implementation phase. The remaining two committees are also making progress. The Crawford-Harrison technology committee has applied for a grant from the USDA Rural Utilities Service and is waiting to hear if their application has been funded before developing a formal technology plan. The Fillmore County technology committee expects to have their plan completed by the end of October. Additional information on the progress of each of the participating technology committees can be found in the meeting materials.

Six more community and regional groups are participating in the 2003-2004 IT Planning and Mini Grant Program.   Ord, Homer, and Hastings have already held their initial committee meetings. Other participating communities include Dakota City, Maskell, and Lexington.

TANgents.   In the spring, Technologies Across Nebraska surveyed community technology committees to determine their training needs and preferred methods of receiving training.   The most preferred method of receiving information was through an electronic newsletter.   Accordingly, Technologies Across Nebraska has begun publishing TANgents, a quarterly electronic newsletter. The newsletter provides an opportunity to involve Technologies Across Nebraska partners.   Contributors to the first issue include Gene Hand, Public Service Commission; Roger Keetle, Nebraska Hospital Association; Steve Williams; Department of Economic Development; Jim Emal, University of

Nebraska; Glen Cox, University of Nebraska Rural Initiative; Phyllis Schoenholz, University of Nebraska Extension; and Lance Martin, City of South Sioux City. TANgents currently reaches approximately 1,500 individuals. If you would like to be added to the TANgents mailing list, please e-mail me at abyers@notes.state.ne.us or let Steve Schafer know at the meeting.

Community IT Planning Workbook.   The workbook is beginning to gain national recognition as a valuable resource.   The NITC has already received a request from Minnesota to use the workbook in a broadband promotion project.   After being pilot tested by participants in the first year of the IT Planning and Mini Grant program, the workbook was revised and expanded.   Participants suggested that sample plans and a glossary of technology terms be included. These changes were made to the revised *Community IT Planning Workbook.*   In addition, the facilitator's guide was revised and includes tips gleaned from working with the participating communities as well as tips from community leaders.   Additional worksheets to help committees plan supplemental assessment activities, build community support, develop a technology plan, and plan implementation activities were also developed.   The Community IT Planning Workbook is available at www.nitc.state.ne.us/toolkit/workbook.